

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND RESOURCES



*OPENING STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN DARRELL ISSA
“The Hydrogen Economy: Is it Attainable? When?”
JULY 27, 2005*

The United States is increasingly dependent on imported energy sources to power the country’s vehicles and sustain the nation’s growing economy.

But, our nation’s increasing reliance on overseas oil imports acts as a drag on our economy. This year, high oil prices will likely account for more than 1/3rd of our annual trade deficit.

Furthermore, all too often the foreign sources on which the U.S. depends for these fuels are located in insecure regions of the world and, in some cases, are under the control of nations which are hostile to the U.S.

At a time when national security and environmental concerns—including climate change—are at the forefront of our policy discussions, governments and industries around the world are looking at hydrogen as the major energy carrier for the future.

Hydrogen holds the potential to be the backbone of a safe, environmentally friendly, and sustainable energy system for the nation’s future.

However, clean, efficient, and cost-effective hydrogen production is a significant challenge.

As a fuel, hydrogen does not exist in a readily usable form in nature like oil or coal. Rather, it more closely resembles electricity—an energy carrier that must be generated from another fuel source.

Moreover, commercially viable technologies to store and efficiently convert hydrogen into energy appear to be years away.

In 2003, the President announced an ambitious effort to transition the country to an economy powered not by hydrocarbons, but by hydrogen. This hearing will assess how and when this goal might be attained—in other words, is a hydrogen economy attainable, and, if so, when?

We look forward to hearing from our distinguished witnesses. Our first panel will examine the status of the federal initiatives aimed at realizing the President's vision, including the extent of federal support for leading state initiatives. We are pleased to welcome three committed public servants:

- Douglas L. Faulkner, Acting Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy at the Department of Energy;
- Richard Russell, Associate Director for technology at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; and
- Dr. Alan Lloyd, Secretary of the California Environmental Protection Agency.

Our second panel will offer their insights on these federal initiatives from a variety of perspectives, including the National Academies, private companies, and the academic community. We are pleased to welcome:

- Lawrence Burns, Vice President of Research and Development at General Motors Corporation;
- Dennis Campbell, President and Chief Executive Officer of Ballard Power Systems;
- Mujid S. Kazimi, Member of the National Academies' Committee on hydrogen production and use; and
- Dan Sperling, Director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Davis.

I look forward to the testimony of these distinguished witnesses.